

Collecting Lepidoptera in Britain during 1976

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Though the opening days of 1976 did not produce such a precocious rush of insects as those of 1975, nevertheless the start of January was once more very mild with daily temperatures in the low 50's for the first three weeks of the month after which a cold snap set in lasting almost to its end by which time all the early geometers were well out, especially *Phigalia pedaria* Fab. and even an occasional *Orthosia cruda* D. & S.

On January 29th I left for Malaysia, only returning just over a month later on February 29th. I apparently missed very little cold weather so that when I got back I found spring almost on the doorstep as the opening of March was quite congenial, bringing out most of the early noctuids about at their normal period. A short-lived cold snap in the second week of the month gave way to very spring-like conditions by the middle period when the shallows were already well in bloom. They were at their height when I travelled to Kent on the 19th, but in spite of fair sunshine little was on the wing either in the Folkestone area or near Rye where I paid a visit to Mr. Michael Tweedie on March 22nd. The final week of March warmed up considerably with the shade temperature rising above 60°F. on the 28th. Its last day spent with Dr. J. Holmes I saw *Archiearis parthenias* L. flying on Horsell Common.

The mild weather continued into the first days of April when the *Orthosias* were flooding into m.v. light together with a spate of *Xylocampa areola* L. and *Panolis flammea* D. & S. which lasted well into May. The second week of April saw me at Norwich for a conference starting on the 9th. Two days later, on a very sunny occasion, I went to stay with Tony Palmer near Saxthorpe. Several insects were attracted to his door light that night, including *Earophila badiata* D. & S. and *Erannis marginaria* Fab. My next journey took me to Dorset to stay with my relatives near Blandford for the Easter holiday, which proved one of the best in recent years for good weather. Good Friday, April 16th, was very fine and warm and I went over to see Mr. and Mrs. Hatton at Holt, near Wimborne. A few Brimstones were flying in my host's garden the next morning, together with the first *Pieris rapae* L. With the thermometer in the 60's I spent the earlier part of the day beating the very luxuriant growth of sloe blossom on Bulbarrow Down in the hope of dislodging larvae of *Chloroclystis chloërata* Mab., but without success. So far as I am aware, this species has not been recorded west of Salisbury where I first obtained it in 1944. On April 18th, again in very warm conditions, I made my way further westwards to Beer Common in South Devon to stay with Mr. and Mrs. G. Woollatt who had recently moved back there. En route I called on Mr. N. G. Wykes, near Bridport, where I saw in

* Three Oaks, Shores Road, Horsell, Woking, Surrey.

his garden *Pieris napi* L. and *Anthocharis cardamines* L. Both these insects were also on the wing at Beer where there was quite an assortment of visitors to Mr. Woollat's m.v. trap. Besides the commoner *Orthosias*, there were several *Cerastis rubricosa* D. & S., *X. areola* and *Orthosia gracilis* D. & S. On the 20th I made my way to Surrey via the New Forest which was alive with Brimstones in the bright and warm sunshine.

The next day, April 21st, saw me on the Surrey-Sussex border where the sloe blossom was a remarkable sight. One bank of it yielded several full-fed larvae of *C. chloërata* Mab. which pupated at once. The last ten days of April were somewhat cooler, but most of the early spring butterflies were now well on the wing, though not many were in evidence when I visited Durfold Wood on May 1st. That evening my light-trap attracted on the edge of Chobham Common a female of *Saturnia pavonia* L. and a fresh *Odontosia carmelita* Esp. It was a very different scene when I revisited the Chiddingfold area on May 9th with Dr. J. Holmes. An early heat wave had set in on the 6th and the temperature had soared to 82°F. in the shade. All the rides were alive with insects. We recorded no less than twelve species of butterflies. Possibly the most numerous was *Leptosia sinapis* L. with *A. cardamines* almost equally plentiful. There were also lots of *Pararge egeria* L. with a good showing of *Clossiana euphrosyne* L. Besides the common Whites, other spring butterflies seen included *Celastrina argiolus* L. and *Pyrgus malvae* L. I was again in Dr. Holmes's company when we went to Noar Hill, near Selborne, on the 19th and were delighted to see a good many *Hamearis lucina* L. flitting among the short herbage, but little was to be seen in a nearby wood that afternoon, in spite of the warmth. A further visit to the Durfold Wood area on May 22nd, this time in company with Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Greenwood and Mr. Anthony Valletta from Malta, provided quite a galaxy of lepidopterous life. Our overseas guest was delighted to see so many Wood Whites flying in every ride, together with the two Pearl-bordered Fritillaries in fair quantity as well. *Hemaris fuciformis* L. was also seen as well as a good many *Pyrgus malvae* L. and *Erynnis tages* L. We also found a full-fed larva of *Griposia aprilina* L. in a crevice of oak bark and several larvae of *Orthosia miniosa* D. & S. also on oak. In spite of continued heat little was on the wing the next day in Alice Holt Forest, or later again in the Chiddingfold area. However, another very warm day greeted Dr. Holmes and myself once more at Noar Hill on May 24th. This time the Rev. Anthony Harbottle had joined us and we were treated to a fine display of the little Duke of Burgundy, which was much more plentiful than on our previous visit. Orange-tips were in abundance with plenty of *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. and *C. euphrosyne* L. in most of the clearings in a neighbouring wood.

On the 29th I travelled to the New Forest to spend the spring holiday week-end with Rear-Admiral David Torlesse. Again Alice Holt Forest yielded little of note when I spent

an hour there en route, nor was there much moving in the vicinity of Brockenhurst by day in spite of fine conditions. However, my host's m.v. trap had quite an assortment of visitors on the subsequent couple of nights providing some 40 species, which included *Sphinx ligustri* L., *Laotoë populi* L., *Deilephila elpenor* L., *Stauropus fagi* L., *Pterostoma palpina* Clerck, *Notodonta trepida* Esp., *Pheosia gnoma* Fab., *Drymonia dodonaea* D. & S., *Cynia mendica* Clerck, *Dasychira pudibunda* L., *Hippocrita jacobaeae* L., also the noctuids *Apatele psi* L., *A. rumicis* L., *Ceramica pisi* L., *Caradrina ambigua* D. & S., *Diarsia rubi* View., *D. mendica* Fab., *Apamea crenata* Hufn., and *Unca tripartita* Hufn. Among the geometers were *Thera obeliscata* Hübn., *Dysstroma truncata* Hufn., *Eupithecia pulchellata* Stephens, *E. exiguata* Hübn., *E. nanata* Hübn., *Gonodontis bidentata* Clerck, *Campaea margaritata* L. and *Pachys betularia* L. I was back in Surrey the last day of May which ended on a very warm note with June following suit for its opening week.

I was away in Provence in the south of France from June 3rd to 11th. On my return the thermometer was well into the 70's, with a rise of 83°F. on the 14th when I was again in the Durfold woods where Wood Whites were still in abundance with a number of *C. selene*. My sojourn in Surrey was short-lived as on June 18th I left on another long distance trip, this time to Orkney. Mr. and Mrs. Ian Lorimer had once more kindly invited me to sample the lepidoptera at a new time of year since my two previous visits had been in August 1969 and the same month in 1971. I reached Kirkwall by air via Aberdeen in the afternoon and we were soon at my hosts' residence at Orphir overlooking Scapa Flow where I had had such good collecting in the previous years. The next morning of the 19th dawned quite sunny when my host and I went over to the neighbourhood of Stromness where we found *Pieris napi* L. flying in plenty with the females very smoky on the upperside. A few Large Whites were also on the wing. That afternoon, walking over heather near Orphir, we flushed a number of *Eupithecia satyrata* Hübn., some approximating to f. *curzoni* Tutt. In the evening we ran an m.v. light on the moors at Hobbister, but the night proved cold. The only interesting visitor was a male *Dyscia fagaria* Thunb., a very northerly outpost for this fine geometer. The following day saw us at the Chair of Lyde, a short pass running west to east over the centre of the mainland. It had proved very fruitful on my earlier visits and this time provided a lot more *P. napi*. It was quite warm on June 21st when we went to the moss at Yesnaby, but it did not provide any new species until just after I had left Orkney when it was alive with *Coenonympha tullia* Mull. On June 22nd we thought we would try the islands to the south which are reached by a large causeway built in the War. We reached Ronaldsay in the late afternoon and penetrated Hoxa Moss with a lot of cotton grass on it. It was not long before my host netted a small Pug skimming fast over the damp herbage and when we examined it closely in

a box, it was undoubtedly *Eupithecia pygmaeata* Hübn., never before recorded so far north in the British Isles. A wet morning greeted us on June 23rd, but it cleared later when we once more visited the Chair of Lyde, where we saw *Saturnia pavonia* L. flying with many *P. napi*. We found *E. satyrata* flying freely later on Glyn Moss, with a few *Gymnoscelis pumilata* Hübn. in a very bright form. Our last afternoon on the 24th was once more spent at Hoxa marsh where we netted a few more *E. pygmaeata* at their customary time of flight about 5 p.m. There were also a few *Perizoma albulata* D. & S., *Epirrhoë alternata* Mull. and *Xanthorhoë montanata* D. & S.

During the week Ian Lorimer had been running his m.v. trap nightly at his house, Scorradales, with quite interesting results. Among 24 species of the macros and 172 individuals seen on the six nights, the greatest surprise came on June 19th when the first *Spilosoma lubricipeda* L. (White Ermine) seen on Orkney appeared with a few more on subsequent nights. Among the noctuids, by far the commonest was *Hada nana* Hufn. in many forms. There was also quite a visitation of *Apamea crenata* Hufn., together with several *Hadena bicurris* Hufn., *H. cucubali* D. & S., *Diarsia florida* Schmidt, *Eumichtis adusta* Esp., *Caradrina clavipalpis* Scop., also *Lycophotia varia* Vill., *Unca tripartita* Hufn., *Plusia pulchrina* Haworth, *P. chrysitis* L. and *P. gamma* L. By far the most numerous geometer was *Xanthorhoë montanata* L. in a variety of forms, as well as *Perizoma alchemillata* L., *P. albulata* D. & S. and some dark *Xanthorhoë fluctuata* L. We also saw two Swifts, females of *Hepialus humuli* L. and *H. vellea* Hübn. The bird life also much engaged our attention, what with a galaxy of sea birds, skuas, many young curlews, nesting redshanks, fulmers, etc. The sight of the grand blue-grey male of the Hen Harrier "stooping" on occasion just in front of Scorradales, was most exciting.

I flew south again on the afternoon of June 25th. On reaching Heathrow I was met by a rush of hot air which reminded me of landing earlier in the year at Kuala Lumpur, for the current London temperature was 92°F. in the shade. It was the start of the phenomenal heat wave which lasted at least two weeks and was possibly the longest in continuity of the century. It brought out insects several weeks ahead of normal and produced huge catches of moths at m.v. light, measured often in thousands a night. One June 26th the thermometer stood at 96°F. and remained at this tropical height for several days running. The next day *Plebeius argus* L. was swarming on the edge of Chobham Common. In the afternoon I joined Mr. J. Messenger in King's Park Wood, near Chiddingfold, where *Argynnis paphia* L. was already well on the wing with many *Limenitis camilla* L., a prelude to better things to come. June ended on a very warm note with 87°F. in the shade on the 30th.

In scorching conditions with the temperature in the high 80's, I joined Dr. John Holmes on July 1st in a part of Alice Holt Forest not often frequented. One of the more southern

enclosures was our venue where *Argynnis paphia* was not yet reaching its climax at this early date. Many pairs were to be seen flying *in cop*. White Admirals were also in plenty and we saw one *Apatura iris* L. flit past us. *Thymelicus sylvestris* Poda was swarming, while Meadow Browns were also in great numbers. About midday we went on to another wood a few miles further south on the edge of Woolmer Forest, where during our picnic lunch under a large shady oak we were treated to a fine display of Purple Emperors sailing high up and sometimes diving down almost touching our shoulders. This fine insect had already been on the wing for at least a week, possibly a record early date for its appearance. Here again the White Admirals were in abundance and we also saw *Argynnis aglaia* L., *Polygonia c-album* L. and *Aglais urticae* L.

The tropical weather went on unabated and it was 90°F. in the shade when the Rev. Anthony Harbottle picked me up on the afternoon of July 4th. We were soon speeding up the M1 and M6 reaching Heaves Hotel just south of Kendal by 6 p.m. That evening we ran a Heath light among yew trees near Lindale where I had taken *Perizoma taeniata* Stephens in the 1930's but, though none of this small geometer was forthcoming, quite a few other species were attracted, including many *Nudaria mundana* L., also *Polia nebulosa* Hufn., *Alcis repandata* L., *Cidaria fulvata* Forst., *Apeira syringaria* L. and *Hepialus humuli* L. females. The next morning back in the hotel garden we found a huge concourse in our m.v. static trap, quite 600 individuals, the most noteworthy of which was a fresh example of *Plusia gracilis* Lempke. Again *N. mundana* was in plenty, together with *Drepana binaria* Hufn., *Plusia iota* L., and many geometers, especially *Sterrha aversata* L., *Campaea margaritata* L. and *Alcis repandata* L. There was also a host of *Agrotis exclamationis* L. and *A. clavis* Hufn.

We were soon on the road again on July 5th under clear skies and a scorching sun. Passing through Windermere we travelled on past Thirlmere to Keswick, then south past Derwentwater to the famous Honister Pass where we parked our car on the summit. Then we undertook the tedious climb up the fairly new rough gravel road to the quarry on the plateau, where we soon found *Erebia epiphron* Knoch flying vigorously but well past its best at this early date. After descending for lunch at Rosthwaite, we motored south again to Arnside Knott arriving about 4 p.m. to find the fine bright form of *Argynnis adippe* L. just starting to appear with some late *Clossiana selene* L. and early *Eumenis semele* L. The following morning we set out northwards, via Carlisle and the Lowlands. After a break at Callander for lunch, we went on via Killin and along the north shore of Loch Tay, then up the steep road to the escarpment to the foot of Ben Lawers where we once more found *Erebia epiphron* on the wing in better condition than the Lake District form. But even so, some were already worn and they were far from easy to catch in the strong breeze. We saw a single late *Hemaris tityus* L. and a *Epirrhoë tristata* L. in poor condition. Descending again to

Loch Tay, we proceeded via Tummel Bridge to the Trinafour-Struan road where we halted near a patch of rockrose. To our surprise it was not long before *Aricia artaxerxes* Fab. appeared with several fine large *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. We then made our way via Dalwhinnie and Kingussie to the Lynwilg Hotel, just south of Aviemore. This had been our haven also in April 1975. The sky had been cloudless all day and the heat intense for these northerly parts. Our m.v. trap plugged in at the hotel did not attract very much, though a few mixed species, including *Dasychira fascelina* L., *Polia tincta* Brahm, *Apamea crenata* Hufn., *Eumichtis adusta* Hübn. and *Campaea margaritata* L. The next morning at just over 80°F. in the shade we set out for the summit of the Drumnoichter Pass where we had briefly halted the previous afternoon. My companion had taken a couple of *Coenonympha tullia* Müll. on the large moss, and we found both sexes flying in plenty and very fresh. A notable capture was a female *Parasemia plantaginis* L. from which Mr. Harbottle obtained a batch of ova. These soon hatched and he bred out a series in the autumn. The afternoon we spent on Granish Moor where it was too hot for much to fly, though we saw *C. selene* and a few *P. icarus*. Later we walked up the mountain road at Kinrara. The lower slopes produced several *Gnophos myrtillata* Thunb. which we flushed from a heather bank, also a *Plusia interrogationis* L. on the wing. Early on July 8th we turned south again under very warm conditions. We stopped once more at the top of the Drumnoichter Pass where *C. tullia* was really abundant. Our next halt was the start of the Struan road where on a grassy bank was growing plenty of *Helianthemum*. Soon afterwards a number of *A. artaxerxes* were to be seen flitting over it and also on a grassy patch on the opposite side of the road. To our surprise a couple of *E. epiphron* appeared at this comparatively low altitude, possibly blown from higher ground. We saw too a solitary female *C. selene* and several fine *P. icarus*.

Travelling south that afternoon via Aberfeldy and Crieff then on to the Lowlands dual track highway to Gretna where we halted for a meal, we once more made Heaves Hotel by 9 p.m. However, after the heat in the Highlands it was refreshing to meet cooler air on the morning of July 9th when we revisited Arnside Knott. It was just sunny enough for insects to fly. On this occasion *A. adippe* was in fair plenty in both sexes and for the most part in very good order. The only other species of note was the local form of the Brown Argus. The weather broke in the afternoon and we had to negotiate heavy rainstorms in the Midlands before reaching Surrey by 8 p.m. after what had proved a most rewarding few days in the northern regions.

The heat wave was still in full swing when I accompanied Mr. J. Messenger to the Durfold area on July 11th. A few days before he had seen a number of Purple Emperors there and was almost certain they included the melanic form ab. *iole*,

but they were not so forthcoming on this occasion and we only caught sight of one *iris* sailing high about midday. However, the quantity of *Argynnis paphia* was quite phenomenal. We counted as many as a dozen on a single thistle head all jostling for position and mostly females. The second brood of Wood Whites was already on the wing. The afternoon was spent in another part of this wooded region where there is a shaded valley. Here a lot of White Admirals were settled on bramble with a few *A. aglaia* and *Thecla quercus* L. which was very plentiful generally. In all, we counted up to no less than 21 species of butterfly seen that day which also included Brimstones, Graylings, Gatekeepers, Ringlets and Commas.

On the morning of July 13th Dr. J. Holmes and I once more joined forces in Alice Holt Forest, but after the 80's of the previous week it was much cooler and dull so that we saw little moving that morning. The afternoon I went over to Weston Common, near Odiham, only to see a number of *Melanargia galatea* L. already past their best. Many *Maniola tithonus* were flying but not the galaxy of insects Dr. Holmes had seen there a few days previously, including Purple Emperors and all the usual woodland butterflies.

On the afternoon of July 15th I went by train to Thorpe-le-Soken in Essex to revisit Mr. Ben Fisher. It was a very sultry night when we placed our m.v. light on a sea wall near Beaumont-cum-Moze. Insects soon came flocking in and by just after midnight we had recorded 66 species of the macros. A feature was the simultaneous arrival on the sheet of females of both species of Lackey (*Malacosoma castrensis* L. and *M. neustria* L.). Though we only saw one Spingid, *Deilephila elpenor* L., there was plenty else to keep us busy. A late arrival was *Pterostoma palpina* L. with a lot of *Philudoria potatoaria* L. Among the early visitors were *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* L., *Eilema complana* L., *E. lurideola* Zinck. and *Drepana binaria* Hufn. The most interesting noctuids included *Euxoa nigricans* L., *Eremobia ochroleuca* D. & S., *Procus furuncula* D. & S., *Leucania straminea* Treits., *Coenobia rufa* Haworth, *Arenostola phragmitidis* Hübn., *Nonagria dissoluta* Treits., *Cerapteryx graminis* L. and *Plusia iota* L. Among the geometers were an *Eupithecia succenturiata* L., with *E. centaureata* D. & S., *Abraxas grossulariata* L., *Plemyria bicolorata* Hufn., *Deuteronomos erosaria* D. & S., *Crocallis elinguaris* L. and *Aspitates ochrearia* Rossi. There was quite a concourse of insects in my host's static trap run at his house. Species which we had not seen earlier included a good many *Arctia caja* L., *Leucania conigera* D. & S., *Sterrhia biselata* Hufn. and *Selenia bilunaria* L. Later that night a heavy thunderstorm broke with torrential rain, the first for several weeks, which helped to bring out more lepidoptera earlier than usual.

But the thermometer rose once more to above 80°F. when I revisited Alice Holt Forest on the morning of July 18th, but no Purple Emperors were apparent, though several had been seen at an earlier hour that day, some quite low down. *A. paphia* was still much in evidence. I went on to the

Witley area and during the afternoon accompanied Mr. Messenger to Ebernoe, near Petworth, where we again saw many *A. paphia* also *L. sinapis* in Durfold Wood.

I flew to Catalonia in Northern Spain on July 20th. On my return ten days later on the 30th, conditions were a good deal cooler, especially when Mr. Messenger joined me on Horsell Common the last day of the month. Several *Eumenis semele* were flying with *P. icarus* and a single female *Celastrina argiolus* L. was seen and a very melanic *Ematura atomaria* L. taken by my companion. The temperature once more crept back into the 70's the first week of August, but little came to a Heath light on the borders of Chobham Common on the 1st. The following afternoon I met Mr. R. Bretherton on Pewley Down, near Guildford, where *Lysandra coridon* Poda was already getting worn, having been on the wing there since late June, possibly a record early date for its appearance. The second brood of *P. icarus* was well out, and I went over to King's Park Wood on the 4th when there was still a good concourse, mainly *L. sinapis*. Many *G. rhamni* were flying, with a few late *A. paphia* and a host of *M. tithonus*. The next afternoon in intense heat I revisited White Down, near Gomshall. Here *Hesperia comma* L. was flying in plenty with *L. coridon* and *P. napi*.

(to be continued)

Notes and Observations

EVIDENCE CONCERNING THE DEATH OF ELEAZAR ALBIN. — Previously nothing has been known of the birth and death dates of Eleazar Albin, who, in addition to his contributions to other areas of British natural history, was the author of the first really extensive colour-plate work on English entomology, *A Natural History of English Insects* (London, 1720 and subsequent editions). In his discussion of Albin in *A Bibliography of British Lepidoptera, 1608-1799* (London, 1960), A. A. Lisney was only able to give the naturalist's dates as "fl. 1713-1759". More information about Eleazar Albin was provided by my "English Entomological Methods in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, I: to 1720", *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.*, **78** (1966), 143-151; W. S. Bristowe's "The Life and Work of a Great English Naturalist, Joseph Dandridge, 1664-1746", *Entomologist's Gazette*, **18** (1967), 73-89; and Dr. Bristowe's "More about Joseph Dandridge and his Friends James Petiver and Eleazar Albin", *Entomologist's Gazette*, **18** (1967), 197-201. It now appears that Albin was born before 1690, and a notice in the London *Daily Advertiser* for 22nd February, 1741/2, provides an approximate date of death which is surprisingly earlier than previous estimates: